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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

L. G. DeNayer, Commissioner — M. Joe Miller, Chairman and Executive Director — J. J. Smith, Commissioner

312 N. Main — P. O. Box 1728 — Helena, Montana

FL-82 — APRIL 14, 1950

Industrial Employment At New March Record

Employment estimates for March, and revised figures for February, confirm the upward trend in Montana's employment economy which has prevailed since the war's end. The March figure for non-agricultural employment in 1947 was 128,600; for 1948 it was 132,000; for 1949, 137,700, and the 1950 figure is 141,000. All estimates are for the week ending nearest to the 15th of the month, based on reports from selected employing units on a continuous sampling basis.

Increase 1,200 Over February

The March figures also represent an increase of 1,200 from the preceding month, almost one percent of expansion. The upward changes include 100 in manufacturing, which was confined to the food and kindred products category; 500 in mining, resulting from return of coal miners to production; 500 in contract construction, of which 100 was in building construction and 400 in highway and dam work; 200 in mechanical and other services. A decrease of 200 was noted in employment by interstate railroads. Wholesale trade was down 100, offset by a corresponding increase in retail trade employment.

3,300 More Than a Year Ago

Compared with March of 1949 the total change is 3,300, or 2.5 percent, distributed as follows: 1,200 in manufacturing, of which 800 was in durable goods and 400 in non-durable; 300 in transportation and utilities; 1,300 in retail trade, mostly in general merchandise and apparel; 100 in finance, insurance and real estate; 1,200 in services of hotels, camps, mechanical repair, and the like. Reductions are noted from a year ago in mining employment, by 400; contract construction by 300, largely due to fewer men on government dams; and 100 in total government employment which shows a federal reduction of 400 and a state and local increase of 300.

Refinement of the February estimates in light of more complete reports brings slight upward changes in manufacturing, mining, transportation, wholesale trade, and services. Estimates were revised slightly downward in contract construction and in government employment.

Follows Established Seasonal Pattern

The March figures are in conformity with seasonal pattern of Montana's employment economy. Experience in past years has shown sharp monthly increases from March into the midsummer months, reaching the highest point each year between July and October. The highest total reflected in the series computed since inception of the estimating program was reached in September, 1949, with 152,900, which was 15,200 above March employment the same year. A similar increase during the next six months would produce employment numbering 156,200 this year.

Montana's labor pool of jobseekers registered with the employment service on April 1 is 16,500. To this will be added substantial numbers released from schools and colleges in June, also the customary influx of migrant workers. A potential of more than 20,000 available for inclusion in the working force by September is forecast on the basis of these facts. This is a reasonably sufficient supply from which the potential need of 15,000 or more may be drawn.

MARCH SETS STAGE FOR HEAVY RE-HIRING IN ALL LABOR MARKETS OF MONTANA

While substantial inroads were made into Montana's winter accumulation of seasonally unemployed workers during March, reports indicate that the movement was slowed down by adverse weather conditions which fitfully covered the state in characteristic March fashion. The stage seems to be set for a heavy re-hiring program in which construction operations and farming will play the leading roles during April, with logging and lumbering, forest maintenance and improvement, retail and wholesale trade and tourist accommodation enterprises following in May and June.

Supply Reduced 2,400 in March

The 18,800 active work applicants registered in offices of the employment service at the beginning of March had dwindled to 16,400 by the end of the month, a decrease of 2,400 in the available labor supply. A year ago the decrease in March was 600, and two years ago it was 340. A conservative conclusion to be drawn from these figures is that re-employment and new employment is proceeding at a much more rapid pace this year and that the labor demand bids fair to consume this season's record quantity of labor supply.

All Employment Figures Expanded

The whole labor market picture for March shows substantial expansion from a year ago. New applications for work were made by 400 more jobseekers than in March, 1949; job openings were more numerous by 300 than last March; the total number of jobseekers listed was nearly 6,000 greater at the beginning of the month and still 4,000 more at the end of the period. There were 2,000 more applications for unemployment insurance than in March of 1949.

Seasonal return to employment is largely effected through call-backs to those employees who were laid off at the beginning of winter. The volume of such re-calls may be glimpsed from the state statistical totals. There were 18,800 jobseekers at the start of the month, and 2,400 were added by registration during the month, which would have brought the total to 21,200, yet the count at the end of March showed 16,400 still actively registered for work. This reflected the absorption of 4,800 into employment. Of that number the employment service placed 1,700 in the form of new hires, leaving some 3,100 who returned to their former jobs or were hired direct.

Prospects Bright and Supply Ample

Reports from the Commission's local offices of employment service indicate bright prospects for April and May employment increases. In most instances there appears to be an ample local supply, only a few offices predicting that shortages will exist prior to midsummer. It is a fixed attribute of labor market transactions that the file of active jobseekers never completely disappears. Even in periods of excessive demand for workers there will be a remainder of unemployed

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March Employment Regains High Level

For the first time since April, 1948, the national employment estimates of the Bureau of Labor Statistics are approximately up to the figure for the same month a year before. This is disclosed in preliminary estimates for March employment this year, showing total United States employment of 57,551,000, which is only 96,000 below the total for March, 1949, and is 200,000 above that for March, 1948.

Comparing 1950 with 1949 a definite uptrend is observed. January was 467,000 below the figure for a year before; February gained so the difference from the previous February was only 214,000, and March made further gains to leave the 96,000 difference. This trend, if continued, would put April, 1950, well above the April figure for 1949, and might even approach the record April figure of 58,330,000 in 1948.

The highest total of employment shown by bureau estimates was 61,615,000 in July, 1948. The highest 1949 figure was 59,947,000 in August last. The estimates cover all industrial and agricultural fields.

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BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS

Comparison of Significant Operations as Reported from Montana Employment Offices for March, 1950, and March, 1949

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements				Employer Visits		Job Openings		U. I. Claims Wk End 4-8	
	Mar. 1950		Mar. 1949		Mar. 1950		Mar. 1949		Mar. 1950		Mar. 1949							
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	1950	1949	1950	1949	1950	1949
Anaconda	72	5	24	2	208	34	108	32	49	8	46	26	43	56	48	64	166	73
Billings	299	108	231	76	1,688	512	826	283	162	74	161	74	61	54	118	151	1,116	331
Bozeman	69	36	50	16	428	127	211	73	217	77	129	40	144	84	235	114	251	74
Butte	103	13	71	12	927	184	704	169	119	27	99	20	109	73	288	116	836	689
Cut Bank	78	20	13	7	260	118	242	61	22	6	5	1	41	13	17	6	233	163
Dillon	13	5	12	5	152	58	113	59	42	17	41	14	49	42	44	11	89	8
Forsyth	21	7	35	19	123	41	92	56	33	15	25	12	37	26	45	26	55	26
Fort Benton	10	5	12	6	64	21	43	24	24	14	29	9	42	28	15	14	34	9
Glasgow	47	12	25	3	438	158	212	92	45	8	35	11	45	38	37	45	234	74
Glendive	97	19	38	17	262	89	129	68	10	4	20	1	17	22	8	4	174	64
Great Falls	225	69	174	57	1,371	435	1,077	480	143	57	179	82	99	106	157	194	939	530
Hamilton	58	9	28	6	816	231	726	286	42	14	15	8	60	37	34	15	377	421
Havre	45	12	38	13	465	162	156	84	43	17	32	20	47	28	49	54	276	91
Helena	224	70	68	34	887	294	631	287	159	51	202	83	133	65	189	197	466	250
Kalispell	291	52	346	108	2,825	869	1,879	700	110	43	41	12	88	22	131	44	2,181	1,060
Lewistown	39	6	30	16	290	76	189	86	59	18	26	6	71	17	73	23	186	98
Libby	120	53	64	19	550	217	354	152	8	6	7	5	2	5	4	5	506	266
Livingston	98	28	43	16	294	89	274	104	95	26	59	21	59	77	71	54	165	115
Malta	15	3	21	4	176	59	152	76	8	5	7	2	14	27	20	2	140	75
Miles City	58	19	23	11	479	166	196	103	66	22	65	29	40	26	59	71	351	98
Missoula	259	72	169	41	1,374	378	949	400	86	18	145	59	98	70	80	170	897	773
Polson	24	6	78	24	583	188	559	232	10	2	32	12	28	20	11	35	364	430
Red Lodge	16	5	16	5	264	94	251	112	13	2	5	4	28	18	18	12	239	131
Shelby	42	11	32	13	253	79	89	44	37	11	46	15	84	45	48	40	161	33
Sidney	25	5	22	5	389	98	234	83	67	11	77	21	102	84	26	39	285	136
Thomp. Falls	46	12	67	21	263	52	326	87	34	9	57	18	12	35	34	57	335	279
Wolf Point	36	9	13	6	256	79	115	84	25	13	15	4	19	33	13	15	212	41
Tchr. Plcmt	54	26	.....	.....	374	111	.....	.....	3	2	.....	.....	14	.....	123	.....	.....	.....
TOTALS	2.384	697	1,982	628	16,459	5,019	12,484	5,127	1,731	577	1,782	700	1,586	1,409	1,995	1,721	11,268	8,928

1949 figures include reports from Baker, Chinook, Columbia Falls, Conrad, Deer Lodge, Hardin, Plentywood, Roundup, Scobey, Townsend and Mail Claims—Consolidated with other offices in 1950 figures.

Along the Hiring Line --- April 1 Field Summary

Anaconda—(Active file 208; 70 women, 34 veterans) Recall of workers to two construction projects began in March, then halted for bad weather. Highway projects not opened up yet. Few transients appearing, mostly asking for smelter work, where replacement opportunities are scarce.

Billings—(Active file 1,688; 350 women, 512 veterans) Labor market activity in March consisted primarily of call-backs. Though 300 new work applications were received the total active file decreased by 350; same seasonal pattern as a year ago, with prospect of rapid shrinkage in the 1,700 labor supply through April and May.

Bozeman—(Active file 428; 99 women, 127 veterans) New claims were fewer in March, indicating that peak of labor surplus had been reached. Construction hires are in sight for about 300 in April, including some call-backs from other areas. Farm hiring should also be active through April. Local supply ample for present, adjacent areas provide a sufficient reserve until midsummer.

Butte—(Active file 927; 318 women, 184 veterans) Experienced hard-rock miners still in demand. Construction jobs began opening in March. Employment in trade circles dormant. Annual trek of 300 or more miners to farm and construction work for summer is about to begin. Will be offset by current recruitment to maintain full mining crews.

Cut Bank—(Active file 260; 65 women, 118 veterans) Construction and agriculture opening up, supply decreased about 100. Oil field drilling will resume about April 15, some skilled drillers have left for Wyoming. Farm hiring will be light until middle of April. No shortage of workers expected.

Dillon—(Active file 152; 39 women, 58 veterans) Arrival of transients, for sheep and farm jobs, maintains current supply in face of some call-backs during March. Weather has retarded full-scale opening of farm and livestock season. April should absorb present supply, with lambing and spring farm operations the main demands. Construction slow in resuming. Female ranch cooks scarce.

Forsyth—(Active file 123; 22 women, 41 veterans) Farm demand for workers slow in developing, due to weather; roads in rural areas impassable. Construction projects just emerging from winter lethargy. April expected to bring employment action.

Fort Benton—(Active file 64; 18 women, 21 veterans) Heavy snows in March retarded construction and farm employment. Current supply will vanish rapidly as farm operations get under way in April. New applicants scarce in March, but claims volume continued at winter pace.

Glasgow—(Active file 438; 76 women, 158 veterans) Spring work on the farms is 20 to 30 days later than year ago, due to severe winter and its continuance through March. Construction projects similarly delayed. April should see rapid dwindling of present labor supply.

Glendive—(Active file 262; 60 women, 89 veterans) Call-backs by contractors on local construction projects reduced the labor supply substantially, in the face of 97 new applications for work received. Further inroads will be made in April as farming gets under way about the tenth and as outside construction reaches full headway. Local supply sufficient into June.

Great Falls—(Active file 1,371; 288 women, 435 veterans) Hiring by public utilities, railroads, and government increased materially in March, the first substantial indication of the seasonal upturn in employment.

Hamilton—(Active file 816; 135 women, 231 veterans) Spring work is delayed by snow, road conditions retard logging operations. April will bring an upturn in demand for farm workers, and the lumber and pole treating industries will re-call the workers who have been off for several months. About 350 beet thinners will be needed in May.

Havre—(Active file 465; 50 women, 162 veterans) Local labor supply is adequate, though employment is already on the increase and April demands will be heavy. Construction, railroad track work, and farm work will all be in the market at the same time.

Helena—(Active file 887; 186 women, 294 veterans) Construction demand rose sharply during March, reducing the labor surplus and the claim load. Agricultural activities will develop during April, combining with the other seasonal resump-

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Along the Hiring Line ---

(Continued from Page 2)

tions in industry to absorb present supply before midsummer.

Kalispell—(Active file 2,825; 430 women, 869 veterans) Reduction of the labor supply here by more than a thousand workers in March occurred in the face of adverse weather and impassable logging roads. Construction was the principal hiring activity, in the form of call-backs in most instances, with trade and agriculture contributing materially to re-employment.

Lewistown—(Active file 290; 70 women, 76 veterans) Retail trade demand accounts for most of the new hires. Agricultural jobs are in prospect in April, with indications that experienced farm labor will be scarce later in the spring.

Libby—(Active file 550; 57 women, 217 veterans) More applicants for work and more claims for unemployment benefits in March, due to the combination of heavy snows and break-up of timber roads and secondary highways, which stymied logging operations and delivery of logs to the mills. Little change anticipated in April, re-employment will be general in May.

Livingston—(Active file 294; 82 women, 89 veterans) Labor demand mounted suddenly at mid-March, after a winter of inactivity. Some agricultural hiring was done, with greater volume in prospect for April and May. Some skills reported as scarce in the construction fields. Many transients appearing, consisting primarily of unskilled or inexperienced workers.

Malta—(Active file 176; 37 women, 59 veterans) Slight change in labor market conditions during March, due to severe weather. No farming or building demand yet developed. April should see a decided upturn in call-backs and new hires.

Miles City—(Active file 479; 85 women, 166 veterans; 66 men and 17 women over 50) The back-to-work movement has been below expectations up to the first of April, because of cold weather and belated snows. Construction hiring has been delayed, railroads are not yet putting out extra gangs, and farm operations have been retarded by wet fields. Outlook is good for April and May, including limited opportunities for transients.

Missoula—(Active file 1,374; 271 women, 378 veterans) Call-backs on construction projects have provided the most promising activity on the local labor market through March. Agriculture is developing momentum as April begins. Lumbering and logging are retarded by roads and weather until April or later. Most sawmills closed or on reduced schedule. Need for carpenters and bricklayers expected to outstrip the supply before June.

Polson—(Active file 583; 66 women, 188 veterans) Due to abnormal weather there was virtually no labor demand here in March. Re-opening of a lumber mill and resumption of school and store building construction was postponed. These and two road projects will go into operation in April, farm work will likewise speed up in that month.

Red Lodge—(Active file 264; 44 women, 94 veterans) Work is resuming slowly, as unfavorable weather continues. Speed-up in demand is expected in farming, construction, and retail trades and services in April and May, with local supply ample.

Shelby—(Active file 253; 48 women, 79 veterans) Call-backs for crews laid off on seasonal basis have begun to make inroads on the labor supply. Oil field employees have already been recalled. A good year is in prospect for construction of school, hospital, residences, highways, and paving. Farm situation optimistic, with hiring to begin in April. Local supply will not last into midsummer. Fewer transients than normal, probably due to unfavorable weather.

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ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA[1]

(Produced in cooperation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	Employment In Thousands			Percent Change[4]	
	Mar. 1950[2]	Feb. 1950[3]	Mar. 1949	Feb. 50 to Mar. 50	Mar. 50 to Mar. 49
Total nonagricultural industries	141.0	139.8	137.7	0.9	2.5
Total manufacturing	17.1	17.0	15.9	0.6	7.7
Durable goods	10.3	10.3	9.5	0.3	9.1
Lumber and timber products	4.8	4.8	3.8	1.0	28.2
Primary metals	4.3	4.3	4.6	—0.4	—6.4
Other[5]	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.5	8.9
Nondurable goods	6.8	6.7	6.4	1.0	5.6
Food and kindred products	3.6	3.5	3.5	2.1	0.7
Printing and publishing	1.4	1.4	1.4	—1.1	1.7
Other[6]	1.8	1.8	1.5	0.5	20.4
Total mining	10.3	9.8	10.7	5.7	—3.8
Metal mining	7.9	7.9	8.0	0.0	—1.4
Bituminous and soft coal mining	0.8	0.2	0.9	293.2	—13.1
Petroleum-natural gas production	1.2	1.2	1.3	—0.4	—8.5
Quarrying and nonmetallic mining	0.4	0.5	0.5	—6.7	—11.3
Contract Construction	6.7	6.2	7.0	7.3	—4.2
Contractors, building construction	2.1	2.0	2.2	7.3	—3.4
Contractors, other than building	2.1	1.7	2.5	20.2	—16.8
Contractors, special trade	2.5	2.5	2.3	—1.8	9.2
Total transportation and utilities	21.1	21.3	20.8	—1.0	1.3
Interstate railroads	13.1	13.3	13.3	—1.8	—1.3
Transportation except railroads	3.6	3.6	3.0	0.3	18.5
Utilities including communication	4.4	4.4	4.5	0.4	—2.5
Total Trade	36.6	36.6	35.3	0.2	3.9
Wholesale trade	8.1	8.2	8.1	—1.3	—0.3
Retail trade	28.5	28.4	27.2	0.7	5.2
General merchandise and apparel	6.8	6.8	5.8	0.2	16.2
Food and liquor stores	3.6	3.6	3.5	—0.4	2.2
Restaurants	7.3	7.3	7.2	0.8	2.1
Automotive and filling stations	4.6	4.6	4.5	0.8	4.4
Retail trade not elsewhere classified	6.2	6.1	6.2	1.5	0.5
Finance, insurance and real estate	3.7	3.7	3.6	0.3	3.3
Total services and miscellaneous	18.8	18.5	17.6	1.5	6.6
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	2.9	2.9	2.5	—0.3	14.8
Personal services	2.5	2.4	2.4	1.8	3.9
Other[7]	13.4	13.2	12.7	1.9	5.4
Government	26.7	26.7	26.8	0.0	—0.4
Federal[8]	6.7	6.8	7.1	—1.5	—5.6
State and local	20.0	19.9	19.7	0.5	1.5

[1]Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.

[2]Preliminary estimates based on partial return of selected sample of Montana employers.

[3]Figures previously released have been revised on the basis of more complete reports.

[4]Percent changes are based on actual rather than rounded figures.

[5]Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.

[6]Includes apparel, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.

[7]Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.

[8]Federal employment—first of the month.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	Feb. 1950	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949	Feb. 1950	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949	Feb. 1950	Jan. 1950	Dec. 1949
All Manufacturing	$60.78	$61.05	$62.88	39.5	39.9	41.7	$1.540	$1.529	$1.508
Durable goods	59.29	59.45	61.30	38.9	39.4	40.6	1.525	1.510	1.511
Primary metals	56.22	57.74	56.79	38.6	39.7	39.7	1.455	1.453	1.430
Nondurable goods	63.71	64.20	65.16	40.6	41.1	43.4	1.568	1.564	1.503
Food and kindred products	54.65	53.76	54.44	42.5	41.9	43.6	1.285	1.284	1.249
All Mining	60.47	60.28	60.91	37.8	37.7	37.5	1.599	1.601	1.626
Metal mining	58.11	59.07	59.97	37.8	38.5	38.7	1.539	1.533	1.550
All transportation and utilities (except railroads)	62.69	63.72	63.06	40.2	40.4	40.5	1.561	1.578	1.558
Transportation (except railroads)	68.47	71.06	69.87	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Utilities and communication	58.06	57.98	58.10	40.0	40.2	40.3	1.453	1.443	1.441

Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel.

These estimates are derived from reports submitted each month by Montana employers cooperating in the program conducted jointly by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Unemployment Compensation Commission.

March Sets Stage for Heavy Re-Hiring

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applicants. This results, of course, from the difference between the specifications of the jobs and the qualifications of the jobseekers, and includes also the "hard-to-place" applicants and the "hard-to-please" job orders.

Prospects during the months immediately ahead are that the demand created by re-opening seasonal operations will consume about all of the jobseekers who qualify for the jobs offered. Labor already on the spot will meet most of these demands. Special skills will be transferred from one place to another according to circumstances, and some shortages are to be expected in such trades as carpenter, brick mason, electrician, steel craftsmen, and operators of heavy duty equipment. Location of these needs can not be forecast.

Hungry Horse Hiring Is Slow

Employment on Hungry Horse dam, Kalispell area, was 115 in late March, engaged in work preliminary to resumption of cement pouring for the footings and dam proper. Weather conditions bar the pouring while freezing temperatures prevail, hence it may be late in April before extensive increase in that employment takes place. The same weather conditions, and prevalence of snow in the canyon, precludes resumption of clearing work on the reservoir area until late April or early May.

Earlier estimates indicate that an employment peak of 2,500 might be reached by mid-summer. The high point last year was 1,900. There are approximately 5,000 workers in the immediate area and adjoining areas, many of them available for these job openings as they develop. More than 700 of that number reside in the immediate vicinity of the dam, awaiting employment opportunities. Call-backs of those laid off last December will precede open orders, it is understood.

Canyon Ferry Becoming Active

Preliminary operations at the Canyon Ferry dam near Helena were employing 100 men at the beginning of the month. Work consisted principally of installation of an aggregate plant, and clearing of the stream bed between the coffer dams. Excavation down to foundation bedrock will follow as the season advances.

Total of employment at the dam is expected to rise gradually during the month. Ample supply of labor and skills for the purpose is reported available in the area. Projects for clearing the reservoir site are expected to be under way in from 30 to 60 days. Outlook for employment of in-migrant labor remains negative.

Highway Projects Start in April

Building progress on the state highway system has been retarded by generally unfavorable March weather, to about the same degree that other seasonal recovery has been curtailed. Out of 49 projects under contract only twelve were in active status during March, employing 212 men. Twenty-three others had been started and then interrupted by seasonal influences; 14 were new contracts on which no work had begun.

Bridge work predominated in activity, with 123 men on bridge contractor payrolls in March; two overpasses employed 33 men; five highway contractors were using 56 workers.

Maintenance work of the highway commission used 641 men on an average during the month, a change of only five from the 636 in February.

Expectation is that most of the existing contracts will swing into action during April and May, and that contractor crews by June 1 will number one thousand or more.

Along the Hiring Line ---

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Sidney—(Active file 389; 64 women, 98 veterans) Supply in some construction trades already showing signs of shortage, and good farm workers are becoming scarce. Demand was light until mid-March, when farm openings developed. Construction demand moderate, will intensify in April.

Thompson Falls—(Active file 263; 29 women, 52 veterans) One lumber mill opened in late March, offset by closing of two small outfits on account of soft roads. Construction starting on small units, main upturn in employment expected about May 10.

Wolf Point—(Active file 256; 56 women, 79 veterans) A few call-backs to construction jobs and hiring of early season help on farms relieved the supply surplus moderately during March.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION
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